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ABSTRACT

This report is the result of discussion of some 35 interrelated issues which have contributed to a loss of definition of "English" programs at all educational levels. Fearing further fragmentation of the curriculum would take place without reform, the conferees propose an articulated English program based on four cardinal principles. They seek to: (1) establish within limited geographical areas a planned, comprehensive system of instruction and research in English; (2) enlist the active participation at all educational levels of the ablest people from all educational levels, and to provide opportunities for interchange; (3) vigorously develop practical aims, procedures, and materials for teaching English; and (4) focus the attention of the entire profession on this enterprise. Delineation of the program emphasizes the value of literary and writing components and includes discussion of teacher preparation. A set of specific activities for local program improvement concludes the report. (RL)

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AN ARTICULATED ENGLISH PROGRAM: A HYPOTHESIS TO TEST

BY MEMBERS OF THE BASIC ISSUES CONFERENCES

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AN ARTICULATED ENGLISH PROGRAM: A HYPOTHESIS TO TEST

By Members of the Conference

THE REPORT OF THE "Conference on Basic Issues in the Teaching of English" states clearly the motives for studying "English," and presents thirty-five interrelated issues (together with their complex implications). The conferees defined an "issue" as an unsettled point on which the possibility of taking opposed positions exists, and on which agreement is likely to be difficult. The mission of the Conferences was to define such issues, to present them as showing the parlous situation into which the teaching of English in the United States has drifted, and to provide a basic "work paper" for concentrating the attention of members of the profession on developing solutions. If no constructive action is taken upon the issues, "English" as a subject will continue to lose definition and become a loose catch-all for assorted topical interests. We will then face the dissolution in the schools of an impressive literary heritage, as well as of achievements in precise organized written expression, so necessary for everyone in our society.

We believe we can arrest fragmentation and establish a sound basis for common understanding by (1) establishing within limited geographical areas a planned, comprehensive system of instruction and research in English; (2) enlisting the active participation at all educational levels of the ablest available people from all educational levels, and providing opportunities for interchange; (3) vigorous development of practical aims, procedures, and materials for teaching English; (4) focussing the attention of the entire profession on this enterprise. We submit, therefore, the following sketch of an articulated "English" program, as a hypothesis to test in the classrooms throughout the school systems of several states. The sketch is not a detailed curriculum, but rather a direction to follow, and a suggestion of the kinds of things which can be read, written about, and studied legitimately in an "English" course—as opposed to the catch-all courses which now exist under the vague rubric of "service courses" ancillary to all other subjects in which the written or spoken word in English plays a part. The content and orientation of this sketch are drawn from 120 pages of the minutes of the four conferences held on the basic issues. It is prepared on the conviction that primary issues at stake are a definition of what English is as a subject in the schools, and an argument for the sequential nature of it—based on a core of experience, a body of knowledge, and a set of specific skills to be attained by the student from elementary school to graduate school.

Delineation of this core of experience, body of knowledge, and set of skills may lead to a definition, and indicate the boundaries, of English as a subject-to-be-taught, for the teaching of which specific preparation is needed.

It will be useful in this delineation to separate at the outset, but only temporarily, (1) the literary component, (2) the writing component, and (3) the teacher training elements.

HYPOTHESIS I

The values of the *literary component* of English are sequential and incremental. They reside in enlargement of the mind by an experience of discovery and recognition, new discovery and association based upon increased recognition. The process is founded upon a continuous furnishing of the mind, first with such basic matter as mythology, folklore and fairy tale, Biblical lore, and national legends, which, interwoven inextricably into the moving pieces of our literary heritage, form the texture of allusion and symbol. Recognized in new combinations and different surroundings, these give a sense of depth and penetration—striking root into a far foretime, at once exciting and illuminating.

Sketch of a program: The present day orientation of *elementary school* education (grades 1–3) in the U. S. is towards the total development of the child. Success is to be gained by introducing him to and developing his skill in substitutes for one-to-one experiences with the material and psychological worlds—namely, *words* in various combinations, read, written, spoken, and heard. In elementary school, subject matter is not divided into various components. Just at this point in a child's education opportunity occurs, however, to lay a foundation for the imaginative enjoyment of literature, and for further discovery and recognition. This can be done by introducing him (at his level of comprehension) to the folklore, fairy tales, and national legends which provide material for allusion and symbol used by both past and present writers in the great tradition, to whose works the child will later come. This material is basic, but the curriculum need not exclude modern material of literary quality.

Elementary school education in grades 4–6 continues the attempt to lead the child towards

his individual development by discovering his drives, interests, and motivations, and by nourishing them. Since interests and motivations stem often from stimuli outside the child, and since nourishment always comes from without, these grades provide a place for continuing to feed the imagination of the child by opening up to him (also at his level of comprehension) the field of classical, Nordic, and Biblical story and myth. This program is suggested *not* to form the whole of the child's elementary education, but rather to give meaning and direction to that part of it which will lead to his further development in what will become later in his schooling the "subject" English. The junior high school teacher able to count on the child's possession of this background can move with assurance into the teaching of English and American Literature as a subject.

In *junior high school* (grades 7–9) the child is supposedly adventuring in and exploring things now to be called "subjects." He is also adjusting himself to the newness of adolescence. Consciousness of literature as an effective way of conveying experience, in various forms of poetry, story, and play, should be brought to his attention in his English class. Here the student must understand not just the excitement of story but what happens to people and what people are like in myth and folklore. He must also be introduced to some of the distinguishing features of each kind of writing and the handles by which he can get hold of the forms and talk about them. His reading might well consist of poems, stories, and plays in the great tradition, from both past and contemporary writers (always within his capacity for understanding, but offering him the pleasures and challenges of stretching his mind). Many of the readings should be from works which call upon the literary knowledge he has found in folk tale, mythology, national legend, and the Bible. The beginnings of the satisfactions of mature recognition may come to him here, if the teaching is well done. At this point in his education the background circle for literature may well be widened into history, ancient and modern, and the beginnings of the play of ideas. It will not be hard to supply bibliographies of exciting material, suggesting a wide range, not limited to a special set of five or ten books, yet well within what we may call the literary cultural heritage of England and the Western World. The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, *Job*, *Ruth*, *Jonah*, chapters from *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Samuel*, *Daniel*, and *Matthew* should certainly appear, along with some sagas, children's histories of England and America, and narrative poems of promise. Assurance that students have had this orientation will enable the high school English teacher to begin to approach the subject intellectually.

In the American *high school* (grades 9–12), though development of the individual remains the goal, intellectual development assumes sharper emphasis. The student is by this time well oriented to the concept of subject matter, and knows that adjustment to life demands his mastery of certain blocks of knowledge outside of himself. The literary heritage is one of those blocks. In considering it, literature should be read and studied as literature, not as documentary evidence for the social sciences. New discoveries are in store for him in the literary heritage, as well as pleasures deriving from recognition and comparison. He should become increasingly aware of literature as a unique way of reflecting upon and presenting life—a step beyond the story-content and experience-transfer of youthful reading.

His reading should widen in types of poetry and plays, in biography, novels and short stories, in essay and criticism, as well as in more difficult and challenging content.

It is probably inadvisable to try to re-introduce a "set-books" program for high school students. Yet the high school student must have knowledge and experience of certain varieties of literary expression. The books chosen to illustrate them should be of high quality. For example in the *novel*, it is necessary and practicable to insist that novels of the following kinds must be read:

Simple narrative (e.g., *Robinson Crusoe*)
Picaresque novel (*Lazarillo de Tormes*)
Historical novel (*A Tale of Two Cities; The Great Meadow*)
Novel of manners (*Pride and Prejudice*)
Bildungsroman (*David Copperfield; Jane Eyre*)
Novel of ideas (*The Scarlet Letter; Arrowsmith*)
Psychological novel (*The Red Badge of Courage*)

In *the drama*, reading a play with enough imagination to know how it would look and sound on the stage requires training. High school "English" should provide this training, so that students will be able to project onto an imagined stage the author's description of characters and their actions, stage directions, and dialogue. This training might well begin with a few modern plays (by Galsworthy, O'Neill, Arthur Miller) and then move back to a few examples of older drama. By this means the students will learn what the perennial technical problems of the

playwright are: chiefly the telling of his complicated story in the short time at his disposal. Suggestions: one Greek tragedy; a comedy and a tragedy by Shakespeare; *The School for Scandal;* Shaw's *St. Joan.* In *poetry*, high school students should know a meditative lyric from a narrative poem, from having read and discussed the kinds of poetry. They should also have a limited but precise knowledge of prosody. The discovery of "roots," the gaining of perspective, the awareness of the illuminating capabilities of allusion, and the impressive communication of ideas are here educative in the best sense. In high school, also, some introduction should be given by the English teacher of the whereabouts of classical expressions of ideas that have animated modern literature in Plato, Lucretius, Cicero, Augustine, Dante, and Montaigne. What a foundation for students entering college! And what a challenge to those who are not.

Literature for the *college freshman* and sophomore should survey the English and American tradition, and examine the literary effectiveness of treating certain ideas of convention and revolt as expressed in differing periods, and amid differing forms. (Such works as Herbert's *The Collar*, Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*, and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* come to mind as expressing excellently an Augustinian theme, based ultimately on the Greek mean of Sophrosyne. What makes these three more philosophically true than the sheer historical facts, or general ideas, which are components in their literary make-up? Again, *Radix Malorum est Cupiditas*, the theme of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, looks back to the New Testament. It is treated by Chaucer in a sermon, by Marlowe in the Tragedy of *Dr. Faustus*, by Ben Jonson in a series of comedies, *Alchemist*, *Volpone*, *The Magnetic Lady*, and by Conrad in the novel *Nostromo*, and in many modern novels and plays. How effectively in each medium? What makes each literature instead of extended pious statement? What can the sheer weight of wording do to transform a platitude into a rare insight?

These first college years are also a time for wide reading, the furnishing of the mind with a great deal of the very best of English literature, as well as for advancing the student's knowledge of the tools of literary criticism. At this level teachers should be concerned with (a) intensifying the students' interest and their desire to form good standards of judgment; (b) improving their reading skill by demanding more perception and sensitivity; (c) helping them to understand certain of the masterpieces in the English-American literary tradition; and (d) giving them some sense of the continuity of this tradition.

The last two years of college English for the major should provide material in English and American literature upon which to base a comprehensive examination in the field—demanding a very broad base for each. For the non-major, elective courses should be available in writers, types of literature, and periods, in hopes that the permanent interest in reading and discussing, which his previous participation in English courses should have given him, may continue to be stimulated.

The directions and substance of the above sketch provide an outline for an articulated course valuable for *any and all* students. In summary it suggests a program of reading upon which to base the incremental satisfactions of literature: folklore, legend, myth—the web of literary reference in grades 1–6; literary works making use of such materials for specific artistic and cultural purposes in grades 7–9; wide reading to introduce the role of forms and conventions in literature and what constitutes them in grades 9–12; sequential presentation of the English and American literary heritage in college. The range of materials is wide enough to be sharpened to meaningfulness for the gifted, the average, and the dull; for the college bound and the non-college bound child. The important assumption is that our schools will nourish anew the magnificent literary heritage of England and America. If such a program be followed, the teacher at each level may count upon possession of a segment of knowledge by his incoming students, and can progress rapidly towards mature discussion of the works he wishes to take up.

Of all the "mandated" courses now in the U. S. school system English is not only the one course prescribed throughout, but is the only one which still holds the individual in focus as a human being to be developed, not as a potential "man-power resource" in the national interest—with ability to communicate (foreign languages), to calculate (mathematics), or to care for physical needs (physical and biological sciences), economic, political, or social needs (social sciences). English can remain genuinely humanistic only by concerning itself clearly and boldly with the great literary tradition.

In *graduate school* the literary component of "English" becomes a matter of professional concern for the nine-tenths of those who pursue this work for the M.A. or Ph.D degree. That candidates for graduate degrees must know English and American literature is axiomatic. If the di-

rections outlined above are pursued, the achievement of a broad base of knowledge, and an undergraduate's understanding of the depths of the re-workings of ideas, plots, images, forms, and rhythms is assured. A candidate for either the M.A. or Ph.D., however, needs more than encyclopedic knowledge. He must gradually gain judgment without the diminution of his enthusiasm for special literary works, or for fields and periods. Yet the M.A. is the proper check-point to insure the filling in of any conspicuous gaps which choice of courses and literary works along the way may have left. Demonstrated competence in coverage and perception, plus the understanding of scholarly method, should be the bases of awarding this degree. The M.A. should be the capstone on a broad program in English literature rather than a specialized baby Ph.D.

The Ph.D. must know more literature than the M.A., having widely explored the fields of poetry, prose, and drama, and also must be master of five approaches to literature *by the time he begins* to work on a dissertation in some special field:

1. The scholarly dealing with a specialized problem of text—validity, attribution, dating, influence—involving judgment of previous scholarship
2. The close analysis of a literary work, large or small, for interpretive purposes
3. The interaction between works of literature and the history of ideas
4. The discussion of some general critical problems —biographical, aesthetic, philosophical, rhetorical, or stylistic
5. The comparative approach based upon knowledge of the second literature in its original language

HYPOTHESIS II

The *writing component* of "English" is equally sequential and incremental and exciting, involved as it is with the development of a critical sense and organizing ability. One function of good reading is to provide a context for relating and putting into perspective the many things that bombard the mind of the student daily in the press, motion pictures, television, and radio (including the mixture of fact, propaganda, advertising, and disjointed communication). One function of experience in writing is to provide awareness that words can be managed by individuals at their own paces, times, and places to an extent that most other media cannot, that they can give perspective to and control over miscellaneous and fleeting experience of all sorts.

The modern *elementary school* is oriented to amazingly fruitful though gradual developments in the physiological and the psychological aspects of writing—penmanship in letter formation, word formation, spelling, simple sentence structure, on to the barest form of exposition and brief narrative. Here the oral and writing components fuse. Both the fun of writing, even on this level, and skill in its practice come from doing it. There is no substitute. The materials of writing are words, the sense of writing lies in syntax, and the color of writing lies in images, litotes, expletives, and a dozen other rhetorical devices. For the elementary school the hand, the word, spelling, the simple sentence, the sense of grouping into the cluster of the paragraph, some sense of clear narration, and of elementary uses of punctuation, form sound accomplishments on which to build—if they are backed up by plenty of practice.

The *junior high school* student should have the chance to experience great growth and development in writing, building on his elementary school foundation. The organizing sense must be sharpened and an interest in precision increased, leading to the beginnings of the analysis of sentence structure in English, or of description of the component clusters. Terminology is bound to enter at this point as a useful handle by which to get hold intellectually of the maneuverability of words and phrases, the effectiveness of subordination and inversion compared with that of coordination, and normal declarative word order. The sense of function and structure appearing in the newer grammars of the linguistic scientists offers perhaps the most stimulating and challenging way of opening up to the child the possibilities of effective writing. But at this point, one sees the absolute impossibility of divorcing the consideration of writing from reading, and from advancing in the former both by alertness to what has been written effectively and by a certain amount of imitation of it. But again no substitute exists in junior high school for writing and for the intelligent careful criticism by the teacher. Marked papers may provide some sort of motivation, may penalize effectively the repetition of bald errors, but grading is no fit substitute for the critical discussion of writing. At this level what used to be called "word analysis" becomes interesting to the student. In addition some introduction should be made to the denotative and connotative distinctions of words. One would hope that by the time of graduation from junior high school a student would have become familiar, by continual exercise, with writing precise sentences, grouping sequential ideas into paragraph form, and that he would be able to write clear narrative, and brief exposition.

One should expect to build on these elemen-

tary abilities in *high school*, and add to them by emphasizing the clarity of thinking which must precede clarity or effectiveness in writing. Facility is here likewise accomplished as a result of much practice. Improvement comes from constructive criticism. Various kinds of writing, expository, argumentative, imaginative, poetical, reporting, and evaluative book-reviewing all help develop a useful sense of sureness in writing. The high school graduate should be able to express a point of view well, organize a judicious book report, write an interesting autobiography, and show some knowledge of various stylistic achievements (such as the different pungency in the prose of Lamb and Hemingway, the balance of Pope and the tangential approach of Browning and Eliot).

There should be no need for a *required* course in *elementary* composition in college. The college freshman who writes well and is interested in continuing development should be allowed to progress forthwith to courses in advanced composition, factual or creative as he chooses. The average student should have continuing opportunity to practice expository and critical writing until he becomes competent in this sort of expression, which will be required of him in all other courses, as well as in life afterwards. The need for written work in courses in literature is axiomatic—papers moving in difficulty from simple explication to intricate analysis, comparison, and criticism.

The M.A. and Ph.D. candidates should, by this time, be competent writers, but should in addition acquire knowledge of the development of the English language, of the relation of language to expression (stylistics), and some understanding of the older and newer ways of studying language. In addition, they should demonstrate an ability to express themselves in a scholarly manner. Since ninety per cent of the teaching which holders of these degrees may at present expect in the early years in their profession will still be in composition, they should know what writing is, what constitutes good writing, how to instruct the average student in its practice.

HYPOTHESIS III

Teacher preparation for all levels demands a more thorough knowledge of both literature and the process of writing than is customarily demanded. Every English teacher, no matter at what level, should have had a course in advanced writing.

The teacher's job, on all levels, is to furnish the student's mind, to stimulate it, and to suggest (and hold to) high standards of student performance. A teacher unequipped with knowledge of myth, folklore, Biblical lore, and fairy tale can furnish no young mind with it, and lacking saturation in it and enthusiasm can neither adapt it to nor stimulate the child's mind for it. The same holds in increasing degree for the secondary school teacher of English in the widened sphere of literary knowledge he must have, and it is axiomatic for the college teacher.

The besetting problem of the elementary school teachers of English is knowing too little literature. The besetting problem of the English teacher in secondary school is the same, compounded by the problem of adapting the at-present rigid sort of specialized knowledge he gains from the pattern of graduate courses to effective use in high-school classes. Further problems of teachers in both elementary and secondary schools derive from the sterility of their continuing professional and intellectual development. The M.A. tends to become terminal, routines of committee work set in, infrequent participation in professional or learned societies leaves teachers isolated, and the still rather formalized pattern of graduate school programs (keyed to the Ph.D. as the research degree) offers little for them.

Every elementary school teacher should have a minor in English with special courses in children's literature which include readings in the fields of myth, folk and fairy lore, and national legends mentioned above, and with courses in the teaching of reading and writing.

Every secondary school teacher of the subject called English should have a sound English major, of the comprehensive type mentioned above, and acquire the master's degree in English for advancement. The need is apparent for instituting a course beyond the M.A., leading perhaps to a Ph.M. (master of philosophy) degree, especially designed for teachers in senior high school and the first two years of college, but which, broad in content, might equip him to teach at higher levels too. This course should require a full year's work in the fields of literary criticism, literary backgrounds, linguistics, and the teaching of writing.

We recommend further that teachers' colleges articulate their work in English with the substance and directions suggested above for the liberal arts colleges, and that liberal arts colleges work with them to achieve this.

CONCLUSION

Our hope in these recommendations is that the subject "English" will again emerge from the educational system of the United States together with the humanistic values it has traditionally but, heretofore, vaguely held. Now almost anything goes into English courses. As the

common carrier for all other subjects it has not only lost definition, but has produced teachers throughout the system ill prepared to teach it. Nothing short of a vigorous imaginative and comprehensive program of action will change matters. It is our hope to bring about a bold re-integration of the literary tradition in the schools.

A "Cooperative English Program," planned by the four national organizations which conferred and reported on the *Basic Issues in the Teaching of English*, needs funds to put into operation pilot articulated programs, such as those suggested above, in at least four states. As a first step it needs funds to free a director and his associate from present academic duties and to provide them with staff facilities in order that they may devote full time to planning, coordinating, and enlisting the requisite leadership in the chosen states. States of differing size, geographically dispersed, and presenting different educational problems should be chosen. The state rather than the municipality should ultimately be selected for the large experiment in articulation since it, in our American system, legislates and supports financially all public education.

Biding the time, however, of receiving financial support to focus attention nationally on statewide, articulated programs in English, the Chairman of the Conference on Basic Issues has outlined the following course of action geared to fit a municipal school system cooperating with a college or university in its area, and capable of local support:[1]

Specific Activities

a) An in-service seminar involving a group of teachers from all levels of a school system and one or more members of a college department. They would begin with a consideration of the *Basic Issues Report*, and the *Articulated English Program* suggested above, and work toward the development of a curriculum which would provide a sequential and cumulative program particularly with respect to literature.

b) A language study group, composed of a group similar to the one above, which would center its initial activity upon articulation of high-school and college English with particular emphasis on writing. Once having arrived at a clear concept of what writing abilities are demanded of entering college students, they would then survey the language characteristic of the students of that school, and working downward attempt to specify the contributions that each school level should make toward the desired end. This might well involve the development of a testing program and the application of linguistics to the teaching of language (possible second-semester activities).

c) The activities indicated above should be reinforced by teaching services rendered by college and university personnel: high school classes in literature and in language (composition) should be taught periodically by members of the cooperating college English department, particularly to illustrate approaches to various types of teaching problems. Moreover, a college representative should be available to assist in grading sets of papers periodically.

d) Groups (a) and (b) would, during the second part of the first and the first part of the second semester, work toward either the creation of a full-scale English curriculum or, at the very least, toward the development of a series of specific recommendations embodying suggested changes in the total English program and a plan for developing them. The rest of the second semester would be spent in discussing these with curriculum supervisors and administrative officials, with a view to their feasibility in the light of other interests and to the possibility of implementing them.

e) During the course of the year both groups would be brought together in one or more conferences with representatives of the principal colleges and universities for whom they are preparing their students, with the aim of improving articulation between the system and the state colleges.

f) Throughout the year the Basic Issues report would be discussed by the various English teachers' organizations in the state in an attempt to arrive at a formulation of the qualifications of a secondary school English teacher somewhat along the lines of the statement of qualifications for a foreign-language teacher worked out by the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association. This would be undertaken as an initial step toward determining professional standards and influencing pro-

[1] Foundations are beginning to support pioneer experiments in articulated programs in special areas such as "advanced placement courses" (Ford-Mellon-Pittsburgh-Carnegie Tech), and "writing" (Carnegie-Hanover-Dartmouth).

grams of teacher preparation and standards of certification.

g) Undoubtedly many activities and contacts which can scarcely be foreseen in advance will develop as any such project goes on. The important thing is *to have the means* to take advantage of every opportunity to move towards improved communication between secondary school and college teachers, associations of English teachers, and the staff of the state office of instruction.

Operational Details

a) The school system involved should be prepared to release one afternoon weekly approximately 22 teachers to enable them to participate in the two seminars.

b) The project should provide for the full time of the director, acting as the representative of the college or university involved, who will conduct the seminars, teach or provide to have taught twelve senior high school classes and twelve junior high school classes monthly, visit an equal number, and to examine approximately four sets of compositions per month, followed by consultation with the teachers.

c) The project should provide a full-time secretary, necessary for assistance in correspondence, arranging meetings, and making contact with various organizations in the state.

d) The director should have the opportunity for frequent consultations with an advisory board consisting of members of the administrative staff of the cooperating high school, the bureau of the college or university which has as its function cooperation with the high schools, representatives from the English department of the college principally involved and from other institutions of higher education in the state.

e) The experience of the year should be reported in a comprehensive monograph which will indicate pertinent accomplishments with respect to the objectives of the year's work and indicate further lines of cooperation.

f) Observers from the teaching and administrative staffs of elementary schools should be included.